



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Eastern Washington Airspace Extension Environmental Assessment

April 2024

**Eastern Washington Airspace Extension
Environmental Assessment
Public Involvement Summary Report**

This report summarizes public involvement and stakeholder outreach activities conducted by the United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (Navy) in support of the *Eastern Washington Airspace Extension Environmental Assessment (EA)*. This report also summarizes public comments received during the public review and comment period for the Draft EA, which ran from January 12, 2024, to February 23, 2024. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is a cooperating agency on this EA.

The purpose of public involvement and outreach during this phase was to: (1) notify the public, stakeholders, and federally recognized Native American tribes (“federally recognized tribes”) of the upcoming release of the Draft EA and, once released, the availability of the Draft EA for review and comment; (2) inform the public, stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes about the Proposed Action, its purpose and need, the alternatives analyzed, and the findings in the Draft EA; (3) identify and reach out to environmental justice communities in the Action Area; (4) provide the opportunity for the public, stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes to comment on the Draft EA; and (5) provide the opportunity for the public, stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes to submit information or comments regarding historic properties. Involvement and outreach efforts were conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and U.S. Navy guidance.

The Navy recognizes the importance of engagement with the public, stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes and took additional steps, such as advanced outreach (see Section A and Table 1), beyond those required by NEPA to broaden efforts to notify and inform the public, as described in this report.

Summary of Activities

A. ADVANCED NOTIFICATIONS

Early in the EA development process, the Navy provided advanced notification and/or briefings to certain regional elected officials, government agencies, and federally recognized tribes. Advanced notifications informed stakeholders and federally recognized tribes of the Navy’s intent to prepare an EA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed military training airspace extension in northeastern Washington state and requested points of contact for future communication. During this time, local media was informed of the upcoming Proposed Action and released related articles (see Table 5). The following, to include Table 1, is a summary of those advanced notices and briefings.

Stakeholder Emails

The Northwest Training Range Complex Community Planning and Liaison Officer, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Public Affairs Officer, and U.S. Pacific Fleet Program Lead sent notification emails on October 5, 10, and 11, 2023, to 14 potential project stakeholders.

Tribal Letters

Tribal letters were mailed on August 23, 2023, to three tribal leaders of federally recognized tribes. Tribal letters were signed by U.S. Navy Captain E. M. Hanks, Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. All tribal letter recipients received a copy of the proposed project area (Action Area) map.

Stakeholder Briefings

Navy personnel shared information with stakeholders and federally recognized tribes early in the EA planning process, including a description of the Proposed Action, resource areas to be analyzed in the EA, and the environmental impact analysis process. The Navy also offered briefings upon request. Table 1 summarizes advanced outreach effort prior to the release of the Draft EA.

Table 1: Advanced Outreach Conducted Prior to Release of the Draft EA

Stakeholders	Conducted By	Format of Outreach	Date
Federal Aviation Administration	Naval Air Station Whidbey Island	Briefing, Bi-weekly Meetings	July 6, 2023
U.S. Army, Joint Base Lewis-McChord	Naval Air Station Whidbey Island	Virtual Briefing	August 9, 2023
Spokane Tribe of Indians Kalispel Tribe of Indians Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Naval Air Station Whidbey Island	Letter	August 23, 2023
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Naval Air Station Whidbey Island	Briefing	September 13, 2023
U.S. House of Representatives U.S. Senate Office of the Governor (Washington state) U.S. Forest Service, NEPA Coordinator, Pacific Northwest Region 6 Okanogan County Planning and Development Fairchild Air Force Base 92 nd Mission Support Group Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Yakima Training Center	Naval Air Station Whidbey Island	Email	October 5, 10, and 11, 2023

B. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

In preparation for the release of the Draft EA, the Navy developed materials to notify the public of the availability of the Draft EA for review and comment and provide information about the Proposed Action, virtual public meetings, and opportunity to submit comments. Notices were disseminated starting January 12, 2024, and posted to the project website at <https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA>, to initiate the public review and comment period. The following is a summary of those notices.

Newspaper Advertisements

Display advertisements were placed in four local and regional newspapers in eastern Washington. The advertisements were published beginning January 12, 2024, to coincide with the beginning of the public review and comment period. The advertisements published for three consecutive publication days, including a Sunday. Publication dates were dependent on the newspaper's publication frequency (daily,

semi-weekly, weekly). Table 2 shows the newspapers and corresponding publication dates for each advertisement.

Table 2: Newspaper Publications for the Notice of Availability and Virtual Public Meetings

Newspaper	Newspaper Coverage	Publication Frequency	Publication Dates
<i>Methow Valley News</i>	Twisp, WA	Weekly; Wednesdays	Wednesday, January 17, 2024
<i>The Okanogan Valley Gazette-Tribune</i>	Okanogan Valley, WA	Weekly; Thursdays	Thursday, January 18, 2024
<i>The Spokesman Review</i>	Spokane, WA	Daily; except Saturday	Friday, January 12, 2024 Sunday, January 14, 2024 Monday, January 15, 2024
<i>Statesman-Examiner</i>	Colville, WA	Weekly; Wednesdays	Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Tribal and Stakeholder Notification Letters

Tribal letters were mailed via U.S. Postal Service priority mail or FedEx on January 11, 2024, to six tribal leaders of federally recognized tribes or tribal districts. Tribal letters were signed by U.S. Navy Captain J. H. Beattie of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. All tribal letter recipients received a copy of the Eastern Washington Airspace Extension Draft EA fact sheet.

Stakeholder letters were mailed via U.S. Postal Service on January 11, 2024, to 113 federal, state, and local elected officials and government agencies. Stakeholder letters were signed by U.S. Navy Captain J. H. Beattie of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. All stakeholder letter recipients received a copy of the Eastern Washington Airspace Extension Draft EA fact sheet.

Stakeholder and Tribal Database/Mailing List

A stakeholder and tribal database/ mailing list was developed to include elected officials, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, community and business groups, and federally recognized tribes to manage and document the distribution of project notifications.

Postcard Mailer

A postcard was mailed on January 10, 2024, to 33 nongovernmental organizations and community and business groups.

News Releases and Media Distribution

The Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Public Affairs Officer distributed a news release announcing the availability of the Draft EA and the virtual public meetings to local, regional, and national print and broadcast (radio and television) media outlets on January 12, 2024. A second news release was distributed to media outlets on February 2, 2024, to notify the public of the virtual public meetings again closer to the meeting dates. Media outlets that published the news release can be found in Table 5: Summary of Media.

C. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Project Website

A project webpage, tiered off of the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Northwest (NAVFAC NW) NEPA project website, was established to provide the public with easy access to the Draft EA, a project fact sheet in both English and Spanish, maps, frequently asked questions and answers, commenting information, project information repositories, and information on the virtual public meetings. All materials posted were compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The webpage went “live” the evening of January 11, 2024. The website URL (<https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/NWNEPA>) was included in the newspaper advertisements, stakeholder letters, tribal letters, news releases, fact sheet, and postcard mailers.

On February 7, 2024, the Navy posted the presentation for the virtual public meetings on the website for the public to access. After the completion of the virtual public meetings, on February 22, 2024, the Navy posted the video and audio recording and written transcript of the Navy’s presentation given during the February 13 virtual public meeting. On March 15, 2024, the Navy posted additional frequently asked questions and answers based on public questions asked during the virtual public meetings.

Fact Sheet

A four-page fact sheet (English and Spanish versions) was developed to provide project information to the public and included the following topics:

- Proposed Action
- Alternatives
 - No Action Alternative
 - Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative)
 - Alternative 2
- Resource Areas Analyzed
- National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act Processes
- Next Steps
- Information Repositories
- Commenting Information
- Virtual Public Meetings

The Navy translated the fact sheet into Spanish based on research results showing a high population of Spanish speakers in certain counties under the airspace.

The fact sheet was mailed as an enclosure with the stakeholder and tribal letters and was posted on the project website.

Information Repositories

Six information repositories were established in January 2024 to make documents available to members of the public without Internet access. A printed copy and CD-ROM of the Draft EA were mailed to each information repository:

- Colville Public Library
- Oak Harbor Public Library
- Okanogan Public Library

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- Oroville Public Library
 - Twisp Public Library
 - Winthrop Public Library (added after release of the Draft EA per request of virtual public meeting attendee)

Virtual Public Meetings

The Navy determined that virtual public meetings, using the Zoom for Government webinar platform, was the best format to reach stakeholders from across the Action Area and ensure effective public involvement for this project. The Navy utilized the virtual meeting format to conduct two virtual public meetings to facilitate meaningful public participation to the greatest extent possible, while being efficient with government resources. The proposed Action Area is geographically broad, with population centers spread across the region. With meetings occurring during the month of February, it was also felt that weather might force cancellation of meetings or result in unsafe travel conditions for personnel supporting meetings or members of the public wishing to attend. The virtual format allowed for a dedicated opportunity for the exchange of information between the public and Navy subject matter experts. The Navy's goals in hosting virtual meetings were to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the project and the environmental impact analysis, as well as have their questions answered as they would at an in-person public meeting.

The Navy held the two virtual public meetings on February 13 and February 15, 2024. Interested individuals could attend a virtual public meeting by computer, tablet, mobile device, or telephone. The virtual public meetings consisted of prerecorded opening remarks by U.S. Navy Captain E.M. Hanks, the Commanding Officer of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, followed by a live Navy presentation and a public question-and-answer session to discuss the Proposed Action and the environmental impact analysis. Each meeting was scheduled for one hour; however, both meetings were extended 30 minutes to answer questions from the public submitted during the question-and-answer session. The Navy posted virtual public meeting materials, as well as follow-up frequently asked questions and answers, on the project website.

The public was encouraged to ask questions about the Proposed Action or the environmental impact analysis during the virtual public meetings. An email address, NASWIPAO@us.navy.mil, was used to receive questions from the public in advance for discussion with Navy representatives during the live question-and-answer portion of the virtual public meetings. Emailed questions were accepted between February 1 and February 12, 2024. During the virtual public meetings, attendees using a computer or mobile device could type their question using the "Q&A" function on Zoom. Individuals could also ask their question verbally using the "Raise Your Hand" function on Zoom or *9 on telephones. A moderator read the emailed and typed Zoom questions to be answered live by Navy team members. All questions submitted and discussed during the question-and-answer portion of the virtual public meetings were not considered official public comments nor part of the official public record. An official public comment could be submitted by mail or email through February 23, 2024. The Navy promoted the proper commenting channels in all public notices, informational materials, website content, and during the virtual public meetings.

Virtual Public Meetings Summary

Table 3 includes a summary of the virtual public meetings held February 13, 2024, and February 15, 2024. In total, 65 members of the public, media, elected officials or staffers, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, contractors, and Navy employees attended the two virtual public meetings. The “questions answered” portion of the table provides the verbatim questions asked via email or during the virtual public meetings.

Table 3: Summary of Virtual Public Meetings

Date/Time	Attendance
<p>Tuesday, February 13, 2024 3 to 4 p.m. Pacific Standard Time Meeting Duration: 90 minutes</p>	<p>Total Attendance: 31 General Public: 21 Navy Personnel or Known Navy Contractors: 10</p>
<p>Media Attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marcy Stamper - Methow Valley News 	
<p>Questions Answered (written as emailed, typed into the Zoom application, or verbally stated):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table 2.3-1: Summary of Aircraft Types and Annual Sorties in Select MOAs and ATCAAs for the No Action Alternative, Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative), and Alternative 2. How many and what kind of these sorties are in Okanogan D, also in A,B,C? And in the Roosevelt MOA. We basically need more detail on the locations and types of flights to understand the impact in any locale. Are the number of sorties listed in Table 2.3-1 hard number limits? If not, what are the hard limits on the number and type of sorties? What are the transit paths to and from the Whidbey base to the Okanogan D MOA, the balance of the Okanogan MOA and Roosevelt MOA. Are the outbound and return routes the same? At what elevation do the jets fly in transit? How much variability is allowed (vertically and horizontally) in the transit routes. Why can't the training (or at least much more) be done at sea? And why isn't this alternative considered in the EA? Very few people live on the ocean and there is less commercial air traffic. Why don't military jets have to use transponders while training? How did you benchmark your noise model with actual measurements (provide a reference)? How are you going to monitor the noise levels to make sure 46 dB noise level is not exceeded? I'm a resident of Winthrop, WA. and I'm curious about the proposed establishment of new military operations (MOA) in Okanogan County. How low are the planes allowed to fly? And are there any rules or regulations that keep pilots to the zone above 11,500 feet? If so, what keeps pilots accountable to not fly too low? I'm asking because I'm a paragliding pilot and my fellow paragliding pilot friends and myself as well as many local residents have witnessed planes flying very low in the Methow Valley. We even have a video of a jet below Bowen Mountain, a popular paragliding launch at 3700 feet. My concern is a mid-air collision, a paraglider may not survive such an incident. I support the US military and would love to feel safer enjoying free flight near my home. The EA states that the airspace of greatest value for Growler training is at high altitude. Why is the proposed extension at the lower altitudes. This appears to provide lesser value training while increasing noise intrusions over high value recreation, wildlife and residential locations. Why is the Navy not providing an Environmental Impact Statement for this request? Will the Navy be conducting an EIS before making a decision on this proposal? Why is the Navy attempting to expand airspace in Washington without following the court's order to examine El Centro as an alternative training facility? In the EA it states that the Growlers will not fly past 30 minutes after sunset per regulations. But they sometimes fly at least until midnight in northwest WA. How will the regulations be enforced to make sure the real flights match what it in the proposal if it is approved? Why are you proposing a new EA for extended airspace when you have not yet completed a new EIS for the Growler expansion at NASWI? 	

- What efforts did the Navy make to notify residents of the proposed expansion area of this meeting, i.e., how did you send notice and to whom?
- How can the Navy consider that expanded MOA with a 300' above ground level NOT have a substantial environmental impact on wildlife and human health?
- You stated it is up to the Navy to decide whether an EIS is needed. Is there no oversight by the government?
- If there needs to be a division of training opportunities and a need for diverse environments, then why are all the Growlers single sited on Whidbey Island and only trained in Washington?
- Can you be more specific regarding the route growlers will take from Whidbey to the proposed expansion area and back? Your explanation was not particularly decipherable to the layman.
- Where can we find the recording for this meeting when it ends?
- Could the average sound level be much less than the instantaneous noise heard by someone on the ground?
- In the draft EA, there are maps showing that the extension would be over the habitats of some endangered species. What else is under the proposed airspace? Schools? Clinics? Public parks? How exactly will the people under the proposed airspace be impacted?
- Would it be possible to establish a noise monitoring station at a location in the Methow Valley, for instance, maybe at the school? We experience high levels of noise from these flights that are disruptive to everyone, but the school seems like a place with the very highest level of concern.
- What are those instantaneous levels under 2000?

- Notable Attendees:**
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
 - National Parks Conservation Association
 - Kettle Range Conservation Group

Date/Time	Attendance
Thursday, February 15, 2024 6 to 7 p.m. Pacific Standard Time Meeting Duration: 90 minutes	Total Attendance: 34 General Public: 23 Navy Personnel or Known Navy Contractors: 11

Media Attendance: None

- Questions Answered (written as emailed, typed into the Zoom application, or verbally stated):**
- Why do we need low level flyovers down the Methow Valley where 5000 people live (I measured 119 dBA one day at the Winthrop library)?
 - Why is it safe for the military jets to not use transponders? We have two local airports in the Methow Valley plus there is a balloon festival + gliders + small single engine planes.
 - Please describe the scientific and public survey studies that provide a basis for the 46 dB limit that justifies a finding of no significant impact. How do you know there are no health impacts as a result of highly annoying, intrusive, disruptive and stressful, low frequency noise (50-200 Hz) of up to 5000 times per year?
 - Regarding noise exposure, studies show that the annual-average DNL metric can obscure the frequency of noise events and is not always highly correlated with (or representative of) community noise complaints. Furthermore, the exclusive use of A-weighting underestimates the contribution of low-frequency growler noise to measurements, as well as the spatial extent of noise exposure. Why does the EA fail to mention these effects and quantify these supplemental metrics?
 - The presentation states that noise will remain “consistent” with current conditions. However, changes in cumulative average levels are modeled to increase by up to 15 dB. Moreover, the cost of disrupting the tranquility of a previously pristine (or at least minimally disturbed) soundscape should be taken into account. This clearly suggests that noise will not remain “consistent” in the region, unless there are other relevant details that have not been mentioned?

- What metrics/criteria are being assessed to come up with these conclusions that there are no significant impacts? The existing noise levels are extremely intrusive - why would the conclusion that the status quo is OK be acceptable?
- Fish and Wildlife has taken several actions to preserve wildlife habitat - setting up Preserve areas, closing other areas to public access - as human population has increased. How was it decided that the roar and vibration of low flying jets have acceptable limits of impact? How is this compatible with these other actions?
- Why not have Growlers stationed at other naval air bases such as China Lake and Lamoree?
- Why can't training flights take place in less populated, areas with less sensitive habitat - southeastern WA, out over the ocean? I'm not understanding how this is a valuable presentation when we're hearing the blanket statement that this has no impacts without any info as to how the Navy reached those conclusions.
- What will be the frequency of flights be over Mazama?
- Hello. You have referred to a 'previous analysis' under the 'no action' alternative. When was this last analysis? thank you.
- What will the maximum decibel levels be in Mazama?
- Has the Navy considered the area to the south of current MOAs, not including Molson? If so, what area and why was it not chosen? If not, why not?
- I am wondering; how much ID airspace is being used by the project?
- Could your team provide a printed copy of the EA to the Winthrop Library? My understanding is that there is a copy at the Twisp Library but not the Winthrop Library.
- Are the decibel levels reported still be averaged over a 24-hour period rather than the actual decibel levels?
- The Navy says there will be a minor redistribution of flights between the old MOA and the proposed area. If this is the case, why is no action not the better alternative considering the cost and environmental impact?
- How many growlers are currently based at the Whidbey Island base? and are there any plans to increase these numbers? and will this effect the number of flights considered in this draft EA?
- Are you evaluating the effect of your proposal on the economy in Mazama?
- How will your radar jamming effect the health of citizens?
- The Navy says one purpose of the proposed area is to enhance training and operational readiness of CVWP aircrew by maintaining aircrew skills. Specifically, what skills cannot be maintained in the current MOAs? Specifically what airspace dimensions?"
- Will you be flying over the Pacific Crest Trail and other trails in the area?
- Why EA vs EIS?
- It's hard to understand—given the relative small size of the proposed extension (393 sq nautical miles) and the much larger area to the east— why is it needed? Is it the altitude of the Mazama extension? Is it the continuity and access for the jets coming from Whidbey?
- We live in a hill side community in Mazama 600 feet above the valley floor. We have seen navy jets flying below our altitude and have had jets so low over our house that we could see the pilots faces and we have seen jets fly just above the treetops over the Chewuch River residential area. Would this kind of low flying be permitted in the proposed plan? And again, how can pilots be held accountable for their flying?

Notable Attendees:

- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

D. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

This section is intended to illustrate the main issues heard from the public during the Draft EA public review and comment period; it is not meant to capture all aspects of the comments or to serve as a legal record.

The public review and comment period ran from January 12, 2024, to February 23, 2024. The public could submit official public comments via U.S. postal mail or to a dedicated email address, navfac-nw-NEPA@us.navy.mil. Postal mail and email comments were monitored by NAVFAC NW staff; comments were compiled and submitted to project team members frequently.

Six thousand one hundred eighty-nine (6,189) comments were received during the public comment period. All comments were submitted via email. Comments were received from government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals.

Each comment was reviewed and categorized into specific resource areas or topics. One comment may include comments on multiple resource areas or topics. All comments were compiled, logged, and distributed to the EA project team and appropriate subject matter experts. The EA project team discussed the impact, significance, and relevance of the comments for the preparation of the Final EA. All comments submitted during the comment period will become part of the public record and substantive comments will be considered in the Final EA.

Table 4 includes a summary of public comments to provide a brief overview of the general issues or concerns expressed during the public review and comment period.

Table 4: Summary of Public Comments

Resource Area/Topic	Issue/Concern
Proposed Action and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the No Action Alternative as the best choice of all the alternatives. • Recommend that the boundaries of all existing Military Operations Areas (MOAs) and Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspaces (ATCAAs) should be re-drawn to eliminate overlap with designated wilderness areas. • Recommend that the military pilot training be held in non-wilderness areas with already disturbed visual and auditory resources. • Recommend putting the necessary training exercises on Whidbey Island since aircraft noise is already present there instead of exposing wilderness areas to noise. • Suggest raising the elevations of the overall airspace to protect wildlife from noise pollution. • Concern that the use of Mean Sea Level (MSL) as the sole metric for floor and upper limits for determining the impact of overflights is misleading. • Concern that this area has been subject to flights for decades and it is time to move the entire training space somewhere new. • Suggest raising the floors of Okanogan B and Roosevelt B MOAs to at least 2,000 feet above ground level. • Request for specific numbers and types of sorties in the extension area. • Request for an analysis of the impact of the transit routes from Whidbey Island to the MOAs. • Suggest examining more alternatives for this project. • Recommend that the Navy install flight recording devices to record real-time altitude and noise emissions and make that data publicly available.
Purpose and Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disbelief that there isn't already enough space to practice the necessary training. • Agree that there is a need for training areas and that eastern Washington provides the proper terrain. • Urge the military to shift focus from preparing for war to fostering peace. • Disbelief that anyone is threatening the U.S. military.
Overall Military Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that when a military jet breaks the rules by flying too low there is nothing that the public can do. • Question why the Navy can't use flight simulators as a replacement for the extension. • Concern that training in the mountains is more prone to accidents and crashes. • Recommend holding military aircraft training over the ocean. • Recommend moving training to a different location.
Overall Environmental Impact Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend reevaluating the entire environmental scope of the project. • Concern about the impact U.S. military training has on resources in the State of Washington and other areas where the military frequently trains.
Air Quality/Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that air pollution could spread and contaminate a wider area including more designated wilderness areas. • Emphasize that there is no safe level of air pollution. • Concern that global warming could increase due to fossil fuel use by the military.
Biological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that the Draft EA inadequately analyzes the impacts on wilderness. • Concern that so much wilderness has been lost to development, climate change, and other human activities that there needs to be an emphasis on protecting what remains. • Question whether the Proposed Action violates the Wilderness Act.

Resource Area/Topic	Issue/Concern
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that military aircraft could drive away birds that many people go to wilderness areas to observe. • Concern for the potential impacts on mating seasons within wilderness areas. • Concern that when a wilderness environment is disturbed it never returns to its original condition. • Concern for jet trail particulates impacting plant and animal health. • Concern that the impact on animals' hearing is not properly evaluated since they have more sensitive hearing. • Concern for the impact on the potential reintroduction of the grizzly bear to wilderness areas. • Concern for the sensitive or endangered species in the area. • Concern that it is illegal to train over federally designated wilderness areas. • Concern that the conclusion of the EA of having a short-term and brief impact on recreation areas is highly debatable. • Concern for the loss of a wilderness presence that has existed for decades. • Request to compare how household pets react to fireworks to show the impact on wildlife. • Concern that the Navy is planning on "bombing" the wilderness area. • Reminder that individuals that raised animals in the past had instances where the animals "killed" themselves and their offspring due to fear from noise exposure. • Confusion as to how with a large country, there is not an area for training aviators while not disturbing wildlife. • Reminder that it is more important to protect the environment and public lands since the COVID-19 pandemic. • Claim that losing wilderness areas is equal to losing the "heart and health of America."
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question that if jet noise impacts are not harmful in short duration, why isn't aircraft training conducted over residential areas. • Concern that while quiet and solitude are qualities protected by Congress, they are not analyzed in the Draft EA. • Concern that noise from military aircraft could disrupt animal behavior and cause stress. • Emphasis on the importance of the issues of noise pollution and the protection of wildlife. • Request for a map showing where each maximum sound level would occur. • Emphasis that the number of places where people can find peace and solitude should be increasing instead of decreasing. • Concern about inadequate use of A frequency-weighting when it comes to the contribution of low-frequency Growler noise. Recommend using C frequency-weighting instead. • Recommend that the EA be re-written using only maximum impact values for noise instead of day night average sound levels. • Concern that the noise impact analyzed was representative of EA-6B overflights, which are much quieter than the EA-18G overflights. • Emphasis that the people who live in the area do so intentionally to escape noise and live quiet, peaceful lives. • Support for the EA since there is already an abundance of noise from other sources, such as wildfire suppression training and heli-skiing.
Expended Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about potential debris from military exercises. • Recommend replacing chaff with a biodegradable alternative.

Resource Area/Topic	Issue/Concern
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question about the amount of fuel each plane uses during each exercise. • Concern about Growlers dumping fuel and the lack of analysis in the Draft EA.
Public Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for the possibility of wildfires. • Concern that repeated exposure to jet flyovers upsets people’s nervous systems. • Concern that many of the people that visit are veterans and uncertainty how this project could impact them. • Concern that a startling noise while people are hiking, kayaking, or rock climbing could lead to serious injuries. • Concern that older hikers who use the wilderness area to stay healthy and fit could lose this resource. • Unlikely to assume those with sensitive hearing would wear ear protection in their daily lives. • Recommend working with a scientist with a doctoral degree in epidemiology to properly analyze the impact on human health for the Final EA. • Concern about the impacts of aircraft noise on childhood learning. • Question why the Navy assumes in the Draft EA that people only visit the wilderness on weekends when people often visit during the week to maximize solitude and quiet.
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that visitors invest money to experience solitude and quiet and the project could negate that investment. • Emphasis on protecting the wilderness areas since these areas are under constant attack by people trying to use them for profit. • Concern for park rangers who live under these proposed areas full-time and their exposure to noise. • Concern that local communities rely on almost half a million outdoor enthusiasts who visit the wilderness areas for their economies. • Concern that this area was chosen due to its low-income and rural nature. • Recommend using the Environmental Protection Agency’s EJSscreen to evaluate impacts concerning Environmental Justice. • Concern that economic impacts were not comprehensively analyzed. • Concern that the U.S. is “wasting” tax money on lost causes due to the perception that the U.S. military has lost every war since 1945. • Concern that thinking people only visit wilderness areas on the weekends is discriminatory towards those who are retired and frequently seek out mid-week opportunities.
Cumulative Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that the U.S. military pollutes the planet, and the proposal would increase pollution. • Emphasis that the limited pristine lands are significant gifts to be passed on to future generations and must be protected. • Concern that many national parks and wilderness areas across the U.S. have been destroyed by low flying military jets. • Belief that this action would hurt more than it would help.
Mitigation Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that the government does not show enough concern or implement procedures to protect the environment. • Recommend the Navy pays for relocation or renovation (soundproofing) of the houses most impacted. • Concern for how pilots would be monitored and reprimanded if flight rules are not followed. • Recommend diverting funds to engineer a solution that reduces aircraft noise.

Resource Area/Topic	Issue/Concern
Cultural Resources/ Historical Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend coordinating with affected tribes.
National Environmental Policy Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend that an Environmental Impact Statement must be conducted for the Navy to fully analyze all impacts of the proposal. Concern that the Draft EA is substantially out of compliance with NEPA standards. Concern for the current lawsuit in the same area mandating an Environmental Impact Statement be performed. Concern that the map lacks enough detail. Concern that the Navy’s public outreach was not adequate. Concern that the pre-made comment by Washington Wild has limited data to support their position, has not taken noise readings, and is spreading concerns that are vague and hypothetical.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grateful for the service the Navy does for the people of the United States. Request to compare the proposal to what was experienced in New York to understand the disturbance. Concern that the U.S. values war and war preparation. Recommend that Navy officials spend time in the wilderness areas they are proposing to potentially impact. Reminder that the Navy exists to protect American citizens, not degrade their quality of life. Reminder that people do not want military flights to occur over the Gila National Forest in southwest New Mexico, as well. Recommend watching a documentary titled “The Year the Earth Changed.” Thought that aircraft are not bothersome and are seen as inspirational to youth who see training in action.

E. SUMMARY OF MEDIA

Table 5 includes media articles published about the project during the review and comment period, including the author, source, title, and date published.

Table 5: Summary of Media

Media Log
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WA Wild Blog Staff. “37 Join WA Wild on Letter Urging the U.S. Navy to Reconsider Proposed Expansion of Flight Training Areas.” Washington Wild. 27 February 2024. Stamper, Marcy. “Navy’s training area expansion raises local concerns.” Methow Valley News. 22 February 2024. WA Wild Blog Staff. “TAKE ACTION: U.S. Navy’s Expansion of Flight Training Area Needs Stronger Review.” Washington Wild. 16 February 2024. Gazette-Tribune Staff. “U.S. Navy invites public input on Draft Environmental Assessment for Eastern Washington Airspace Extension.” Okanogan Valley Gazette-Tribune. 19 January 2024. Stamper, Marcy. “Navy releases plan to expand flight training over Methow.” Methow Valley News. 18 January 2024. U.S. Navy Press Release. “U.S. Navy Invites Public Input on Draft Environmental Assessment for Eastern Washington Airspace Extension.” Statesman Examiner print edition. 17 January 2024. Stamper, Marcy. “Navy considers expansion of flight-training area in the county.” Methow Valley News. 30 November 2023.